



J. W. Freeman.

19 Main Street,
Charlestown, Mass.

Des to Henry

John Martin Luther Babcock (1822-1894), Autobiography, written 1893, printed posthumously, 1894

1822 Born in Andover, Maine

1825 Removes with family to Boston, MA. Some schooling and independent study. Works at various jobs, including printing and as office boy to a lawyer. Has access to a library, practices oratory.

1843 Marries Martha Day Ayer of Plaistow, NH. Journeymen printer. Attempted newspaper fails. Wife dies, 1846. Health gives way, suffers from melancholia.

1849 Marries Miriam C. Tewksbury of Wilmot, NH and moves to Wilmot. Joins Free Will Baptist Church. Gives first sermon, 1850, and begins leading prayer meetings and occasional services.

1852 Licensed and preaches two years in N. Wilmot

1854 Ordained in Wilmot. Called to Strafford, VT.

✓ 1856 Called to Farmington, NH Free Will Baptist Church

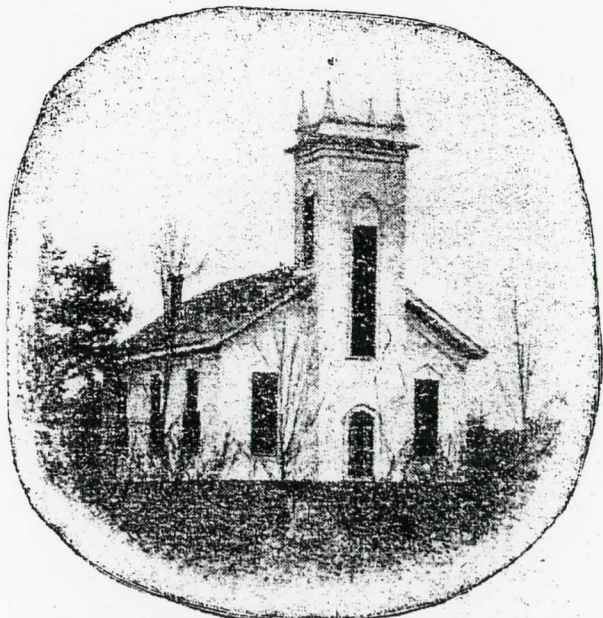
✓ 1857 Appointed "building agent" of a new meeting house, "with full power to raise the necessary funds, and to proceed to build the house with all possible dispatch". Building dedicated, October.

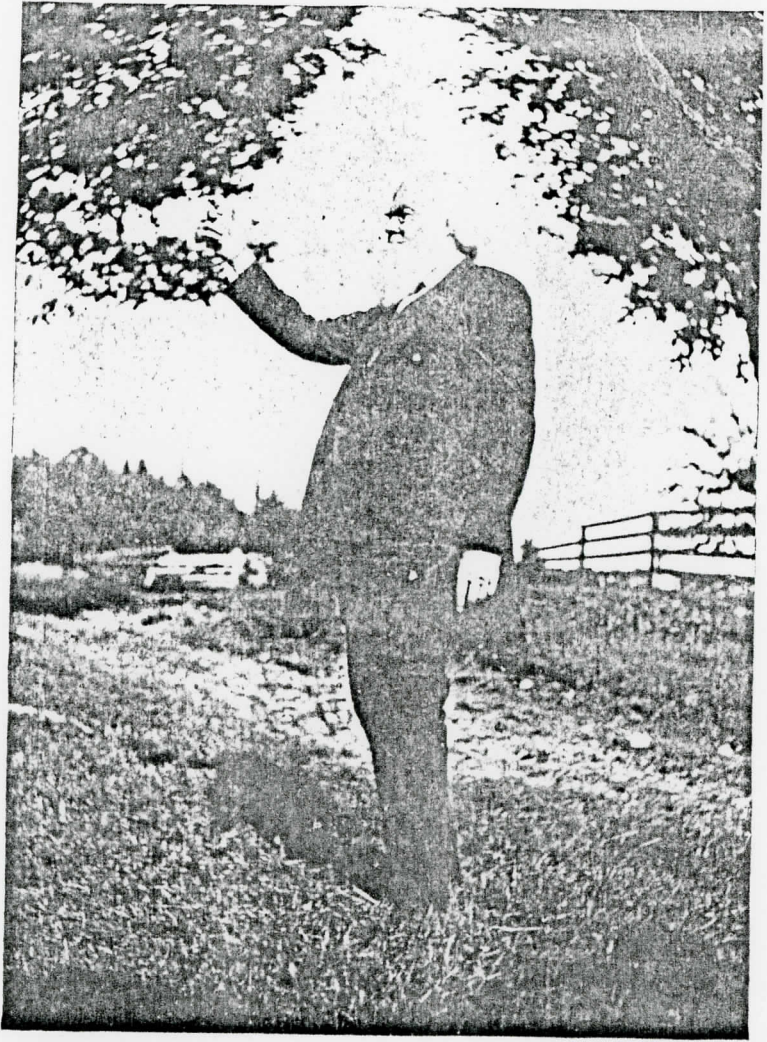
1858 Suffering mental exhaustion, Babcock resigns at Farmington. Preaches at Effingham, NH and W. Buxton ME over the next two years.

1860 Autobiography ends.

Post-1860 Babcock serves Unitarian churches in Lancaster, NH and Groton, MA. Edits a reform newspaper, The New Age (1875-1877). Lectures and writes in support of temperance, workers' rights, women's suffrage and women's rights. Recruited as a political speaker for liberal candidates. Writes novel, The Dawning, 1886.

1894 Dies in hotel fire in Boston. Buried with second wife and daughter in N. Wilmot, NH.





Yours as ever

J. M. L. Babcock

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

John Martin Luther Babcock

TOGETHER WITH A

Discourse delivered at the Funeral, and Addresses
given at the Memorial Service.

Published for the Family.

1894.

CHAPTER IV.

MINISTRY.

The "revival" in which I was "converted" was a sort of union affair, as it is termed; that is, Freewill Baptists, Trinitarian Congregationalists and Methodists were engaged in it. It was intimated to me that I should be warmly welcomed to church-membership in either of these sects. I elected to join the Freewill Baptists, on two grounds. First, this denomination had at an early day in the abolition movement taken an anti-slavery position, and borne testimony against "the sum of all villainies." Such was its voice as a denomination, though a large portion of its church-members in New Hampshire at least, still remained firm in their pro-slavery prejudices. I did not, it is true, know this at the time; but I presume if I had I should have chosen that sect all the same, because it was the only religious body (besides the Quakers) that had at that day the decency to protest against putting women on the auction-block. Second; though I then knew very little about theology, I did know that there was such a thing as Calvinism; and in the fervor of my newborn zeal I loathed the monstrous dogma that God had doomed a "certain but indefinite number" of the human race (so says the creed) to an eternal hell,—and made, too, that characteristic and godlike decree before the "foundation of the world." Now the Freewill Baptists were Arminian in their theology,—had rejected the "predestination" and "election" nonsense, and proclaimed that "salvation was free." I was therefore inclined to this sect by the force of my natural tastes and impulses.

For some months after this my thoughts puzzled and struggled over the personal problem whether I should continue to cultivate the soil (a noble and honest occupation in itself), or whether I

should attempt to do something else. I had not yet recovered from the shock of my first defeat, and still sorely distrusted my own abilities. At the same time I had an intense yearning for some form of intellectual life, and feared that my brain would stagnate, as it evidently had in the case of most of my neighbors, in the simple but wearing toils of a farmer's existence. 11x

In this state of doubt and perplexity, it happened, the next summer, that an opening was accidentally offered to me, and, with not more than an hour's notice, I mounted the pulpit, and gave my first sermon,—an entirely extemporaneous effort, without any previous preparation whatever. Of course I went through, and talked the usual length of time without stumbling. But the performance did not settle my doubts. I still could not bring myself to believe that I was made for a preacher. 1250

In this state of uncertainty I passed several months of the succeeding winter in Boston. I set types in Mr. Butts' office for the family subsistence, and used my evenings to renew some former associations, and to reawaken, if I could, my mental energies. 1251

I returned to Wilmot in early spring, to meet the sorrow of laying away in the grave the dear form of the lovely babe, the first that was born to me in my second marriage,—little Mary Louisa, aged fifteen months. Her mother sleeps beside her now.

On the question that had been engaging my thoughts for months, my mind not many weeks after this came to a decision. I could not settle down to a farmer's life; what, then, should I do? I had a definite purpose,—I was bent on making myself of some use to the world. What calling or occupation could offer better opportunities than that of the Ministry? Here was a profession that, by its very nature, could have no connection with selfishness or pride. It could take no counsel of policy or expediency. It is devoted to the noblest objects, and must be controlled and guided by the highest moral considerations. It could listen to nothing but the voice of absolute Truth,—care for nothing but the eternal Right. A person of moderate abilities might do some service to his race in such a work as this. The die was cast,—I would be a minister.

The next question was,—Must I prepare myself by a course of study in some theological school? How did I learn to set types? I learned without a master,—by my own unaided practice. The way to learn to set types is, clearly, to set types. Then the way to learn to preach is—to preach. Of course, if there were technical or scientific secrets to be learned, it would be necessary to go where they were revealed or taught. But how much science must a man be master of before he could learn to say what he thinks. I am now twenty-eight years of age,—I will waste no time in the schools. I will make the needs, the prejudices, the passions of my fellow-men my school; if I cannot learn how to preach in such a school, I could not from a professor of divinity. So I began.

I gave sermons here and there, for awhile, as I had opportunity,—sometimes holding forth in a schoolhouse, and sometimes taking the place of a minister who was ill.

The Freewill Baptist churches were arranged in groups of neighboring bodies, perhaps twenty churches in a group. These associations were called Quarterly Meetings, and met in religious convocation four times a year. At one of these, in January, 1852, I was formally licensed to preach the gospel. For the next two years I preached in Wilmot. This period of my life is rather barren of interest or incident. 1852-1854

There was one episode that I will recount, because it will tend to show how I had my eyes opened to the actual state of religious character and quality in the people among whom my lot was now cast, and how some of the fond illusions with which I set out were too suddenly dissolved.

Early in the spring I wished to purchase a cow. I had no skill in judging of an animal's qualities by external examination, an art in which some old farmers are exceedingly expert. So I went to one of my deacons, a man who, for that locality, dealt largely in cattle, and stated my want. At this time I had full confidence in his Christian integrity. I had indeed heard some hints that he was not trustworthy in his business transactions; but he was so loud in his professions, and so zealous in prayer-meeting,

that in my simplicity I had dismissed these innuendoes as unworthy of belief. So when he told me that he had just the cow I wanted, that he would sell me below her value, I fully believed him. It is true it was some slight shock to my confidence when he went on to expatiate on the very excellent qualities of his cow; but, putting the matter on the very lowest ground, I reflected that no man would, for the sake of a few dollars, gravely damage his reputation among his neighbors by a dishonest transaction. I paid him his price, which was as high as a first-class animal would command. As it turned out, it was the meanest and most nearly worthless of any domestic animal ever reared. But I said nothing; I only thought that I might profit by the lesson in the future. Some others, who could not help knowing the facts, made some talk about it, much to the deacon's discredit. But I took my punishment like a little man.

It did, however, have the effect of convincing me that the education of this people in the principles of Christian morality had been sadly neglected, and impressed me with the necessity and importance of giving these Christians more "practical" sermons. And in this way my attention was turned to this line of instruction.

Many months afterwards, when I had seen more evidences of the moral obtuseness of this people, I remember that I prepared myself with a "strong" sermon on the urgency of the requirement that Christians should be truthful and honest in their daily lives, if they would not bring dishonor on the gospel they professed. Now I most solemnly affirm that in this sermon I did not have the deacon in my mind. I was not disposed to put a personal grievance into a discourse; and, besides, some more recent circumstances had driven the thought of the deacon's cheat out of my mind. I could not help noticing, however, that the deacon was very uneasy during the service; and, as soon as it was over, one of his sons went out of the church, and said, in the hearing of many, "There! he said everything he could say without saying 'cow' right out." This revealed to me how much this family had suffered in their feelings about the "cow trade," and it was encouraging

to know that they were not insensible to the lash. There is some hope of a man's moral renovation as long as a good degree of sensibility remains. I had got the best end of the "trade" after all.

In the course of two years I had made some advancement in the art of preaching, and now felt some confidence I might justly attempt to be useful in a larger field.

In January, 1854, I was at a session of the Quarterly Meeting, held at Wilmot, formally ordained to the work of the ministry, and now became a full-fledged clergyman.

I soon received a "call" to Strafford, Vermont, and, after preaching there for one Sunday, I accepted the invitation, and removed to that town with my family. Here I passed two pleasant years; but nothing occurred worthy of special record. The anti-slavery sentiment was much more vigorous and wide-spread in Vermont than it was in New Hampshire. In my church or audience there was none of that besotted prejudice in favor of slavery that I had found in Wilmot; and there was no necessity for those anti-slavery sermons that had been a source of irritation to some of my hearers in my first ministry. In the elections of the autumn of that year the victory for anti-slavery was practically won in Vermont.

It was here that I sought to prepare myself for future usefulness by making an experiment. My parish was extended over a large territory; and, according to the custom of those days, I appointed meetings, on the evening of week-days, for the benefit of the aged or infirm in the outlying districts, who could not come four or five miles to church very often on Sunday. Hitherto I had not been able to preach without considerable preparation. But, to be fitted for emergencies, I wanted to be able to preach off-hand. So I adopted the plan of going out to these evening meetings, and giving a "preach" without the slightest preparation. I wanted to get the ability and habit of "thinking on my feet." If I have ever had any facility in purely extemporaneous speaking, it is due to such efforts as these, more than to any natural gift. In my original power of speech I was not fluent.

There is, indeed, such a thing as extemporaneous speech, the main part of which has been thoroughly thought out beforehand. What I desired was to be able to think as I went along.

Besides the fact that I was one year in Strafford elected to have charge of the public schools, there is nothing in particular to set down in my life there. There was no "religious revival" in the town while I remained there.

My next ministry was in the town of Farmington, in New Hampshire, where I removed in the summer of 1856. A village had been built up here by a thriving shoe industry, and a small Freewill Baptist church had been organized. I not only had a "call" to go there, but had been urged by the brethren who managed affairs at the headquarters of the denomination in Dover to accept it. The substance of this advice was, that the village was growing, and, by the hard work of an earnest and able man a flourishing church might be built up there.

The first point was to get a church built there, for the Freewill Baptists had no fit place of worship. An old and decayed meeting-house, built in the old times before a village was thought of, was all that the church had to meet in; and as this gloomy house was three-fourths of a mile away from the village it was impossible to gather an audience within its walls on Sunday,—an audience large enough to give any hope of the future.

One of our leading ministers had been my immediate predecessor. He had devoted his ministry of two years to the special object of building a new meeting-house in the village; and had given up the work in despair.

I went there under these conditions. I soon saw that for some months at least a new meeting-house was not to be thought of, much less openly advocated. In fact some members of the church "encouraged" me from the first by saying that the Freewill doctrine had no chance in that community, and a new house of worship could never be built there. I thought I would consider the matter for myself, and said nothing.

But what forced the postponement of any meeting-house enter-

prise was the fact that the entire community was terribly stirred up and excited over politics. We were in the midst of the Fremont campaign of 1856.

I have witnessed and passed through fifteen presidential elections, and the campaign of 1856 surpasses any of them, or all of them, for its purely moral effectiveness and grandeur. The campaign of 1840 was fully as glowing in its excitement; but it was a merely thoughtless craze, and nobody knew what the hullabalo was all about.

" Will go for Old Tip, therefore,
Without a why or wherefore "

was a quite accurate description of the spirit of that canvass. The election of 1860, when Lincoln was elected, was very quiet and inanimate indeed, for the contest had been practically decided four years earlier, and it was seen to be a foregone conclusion from the beginning of the canvass.

But in 1856 the political conditions were entirely unlike any which distinguished a campaign before or since,—at least in my remembrance.

The anti-slavery sentiment that had been slowly gaining in force and volume as a political movement since 1840 now appeared in the field with a strength and vigor that threatened or promised to sweep the country. The outrages which the "border ruffians," the tools of the slave power, were inflicting on the free settlers of Kansas, and the horrible atrocities of midnight raids on the homes of peaceable emigrants, borne on every Western breeze, aroused the pity and indignation of the North. When these emigrants at length arose to oppose the invader, and John Brown's war-cry at Ossawatimie was heard throughout the land, the excitement blazed with intensity of heat. But the impulse which set the multitudes in political array was a purely moral impulse. No question of dollars and cents entered into the conflict; no man's pocket was appealed to. It was only the claims of Right against Wrong, of Freedom against Slavery.

It was into the whirl of such a political tempest that I was cast in the summer of 1856 in Farmington. Of course the people had

no ear for the abstract dogmas of religion. Everything was interpreted with reference to the political situation. If the preacher happened casually to say that no man should be the "slave of his passions," the phrase was caught up and discussed as to its bearing on the affairs of "bleeding Kansas." In my constitutional caution I delayed making a public avowal of my convictions till I could gain some insight into the state of the public mind, and the nature of the prevailing sentiment. I wanted to know just where and how to strike. I never felt more deeply impressed with the importance of making a right use of my abilities and my opportunities. So I preached calmly the general doctrines of religion, as if unconscious of the storm raging around me. I contented myself with the increase in the number of my small audience, from Sunday to Sunday,—an increase which usually marks a new preacher's advent, and which it depends on his own abilities to hold. So matters went on for weeks.

At the beginning of October I felt I must no longer delay. It was time I should fire a shot. My preaching was having no visible effect. I could not content myself to be

" Dropping buckets into empty wells,
And growing old in drawing nothing up."

But I had been treasuring up such a volume of "wrath against the day of wrath" that I was impelled to say more than I then thought I could properly say as a part of a religious service. So one Sunday I quietly gave notice that on the following Thursday evening I would state my views on the political situation.

I went down to the old meeting-house on that evening in a mental state the very calmness of which surprised me. I found about twice the number of my usual audience, but the general aspect was very quiet. I began by stating the general grounds on which chattel slavery was shown to be a monstrous wrong, and the giant sin of permitting it to exist anywhere, as well as the absurd disgrace of continuing the iniquitous system in a land formally dedicated, as ours was, to liberty. All this I might properly have declared in a sermon on Sunday. But then I went on to apply the

principles I had laid down to the existing position of political parties. The Democratic party, which had for forty years stood as the abject tool of the Slave power, had in the present campaign taken a position in defence of slavery. It was true they had attempted to mask their batteries; but in spite of all attempted disguises, the fact was evident that the success of that party would be regarded, South and North, as a triumph of slavery, and a blow at the hope of freedom. In the conflict then raging in Kansas, the Democrats were manifestly aiding the effort to fasten the evil of slavery on those virgin prairies, and if the election went in their favor that infamous effort might possibly succeed. The Republican party, with its watchwords of "Free Soil, Free Men, and Fremont," were in political array against slavery, and their triumph would at least check its extension. Their platform, I said, it is true, does not come up to my ideal. They said, "No extension of slavery;" but my platform was, "No slavery anywhere." However, as the party that was looking towards liberty, and proposed to strike at least a partial blow for freedom, it was immeasurably to be preferred to the other party. And I said it was inconceivable to me how a faithful Christian could support a party that had raised the black flag of slavery.

I spoke one hour and thirty minutes, and the meeting closed quietly. I went home that night with the impression that my effort had not caused the sensation, or produced the effect, that I anticipated. But I sank to sleep with the comfortable consciousness that I had done what was right, and the consequences might take care of themselves.

The next forenoon five gentlemen came to my house. They were prominent citizens as well as leading Republicans. They came to say that they had just learned that I had given a masterly lecture the previous evening; that they were sorry they had not heard it, but the fact was they had not known it was to be given. (The fact was, I suspect, that my denomination was so small and so despised in that community that it was not recognized as an appreciable force. They did not see that any good could come

out of the "Nazareth" of a Freewill church; and so my notice had been treated as of no account.) Now, from what had been told of the lecture, the whole village was anxious to hear it; and would I do them the favor to repeat it, on any evening I might name, at the large hall in the village which was used as the Republican headquarters. I told them, politely, that I could not do that, because I had spoken as a minister and not as a politician; and, speaking in my own church I was free to say just what I thought; that if I should speak under Republican auspices I might say some things they would not indorse, and I did not wish that the party should be responsible for my utterances. The committee attempted to controvert both of my positions; they argued and persuaded at some length; but I did not yield. I told them, finally, that if they desired it I would repeat my speech, on any evening they might choose, in my own church. After demurring to the place, on the ground that it was a pity to take the people a mile away from their homes when a much better place could be had at their own doors, they finally thanked me for my willingness to repeat it anywhere, and an evening of the next week was fixed upon. The next morning posters were up everywhere, announcing the meeting.

Now I began to see that my first meeting had not fallen flat. A new brand was thrown into the political flame, and the excitement seethed with added fury. What were we coming to if ministers must go into politics like that! Why, the very foundations of religion would be destroyed. In such an excitement passions seize men of which they are afterwards ashamed. So violent may men become under such conditions that there were even hints of personal violence to myself,—though this I did not hear of till afterwards. But it was supposed that there was so much danger, that a large number of Republicans went early to the church, and surrounded the pulpit, to protect me from assault.

I went to the meeting as calmly as I went to the first, without anticipating what I saw. I have never known a church or hall to be more densely packed. Every inch of sitting or standing room

was fully occupied, and the crowd surged up the pulpit stairs, so it was with some inconvenience that I gained my place. Besides this, every window was open, and crowds were standing at them, and there were hundreds who could not get so near.

I began my speech, and went through with the general line of remark that I had used on the first evening; then I prepared to close. When this was perceived, the cry went up all over the house, "Go on! go on!" I was now thoroughly warmed up. All the pent-up thought that had been gathering force for weeks was now let loose, and facts and illustrations found utterance as fast as I could speak them. And I was not permitted to stop till I had talked for more than three hours.

Those who never make speeches do not know how much help the extemporaneous orator receives from the enthusiasm of an aroused and largely sympathetic audience. It seemed to be that evening as if some invisible power were near me, suggesting thoughts and inspiring me with irresistible force. I had similar experiences on other occasions afterwards. I do not believe that such an afflatus is caused by any occult or spiritual influence. It is simply the effect of that sympathy, that magnetism (for want of another name), with which one mind acts or reacts on another, and is only a revelation of that "touch of Nature" that "makes the whole world kin."

Such is the account of my first political speech.

It is amusing after all these years to think of the ferment into which that village was thrown by this speech. It was the one topic of discussion in the shops and the stores. It is one of the superstitions that a clergyman is to be treated at least with outward respect. It had always previously been accorded to me. But for a few days even this seemed to be forgotten. Men in their rage did not hesitate to say to me, "As soon as election is over, you will be driven from this town." "Why not before?" I responded. Of course I was not indifferent to this sort of talk. About half of my usual audience on Sunday were Democrats. But, through all the nervous strain and excited feeling to which I

was subjected, I was at peace with myself; and quite happy in all the turmoil, in the consciousness that I was not an entirely useless stick in the world.

But, the battle once begun, I had to keep it up for the few weeks that intervened before election. Every Sunday my sermons flamed with abolition. A very prominent and able Democrat was brought to Farmington to speak, who made a direct attack on me as a "black-coated villain." He referred to the efforts of the Democratic party early in the century to establish religious toleration in New Hampshire, and claimed that the Freewill Baptists were therefore under great obligations to that party, and that it was ingratitude in them to turn against their best friends. I had to reply to him; and among other things, call to mind the fact that the Freewill Baptist Book Establishment at Dover had been year after year denied an act of incorporation by the Democratic legislature of New Hampshire because the "Morning Star," the denominational organ, was an "abolition sheet." People thought his own guns were turned upon him.

One incident will show the bitterness of feeling that now possessed the more violent partisans. One evening I had an appointment to preach in a neighboring town. Of course I was seen to ride out of the village in the afternoon. On my return the next morning, I was met at the entrance of the village by a friend who told me that a report was buzzing about the shops that I had refused to shelter an escaping slave,—with the comment that it was now to be seen what all my abolition zeal amounted to. (This was my friend's report, not his own opinion.)

I hurried home. It turned out that rather late the evening before my wife was called to the door by a knock, and saw a colored man standing there, who asked if he could be kept for the night, as he was running away from slavery. She was alone in the house, with three little children, and another expected very soon, and did not think she ought to have a stranger, black or white, stay all night. So she directed him to the house of a brother in the church, near by, who was a good anti-slavery man,—and the

succeed by any form of indirection or deceit. It is true that this provision proved to be the salvation of that society. But this makes the matter no better. A dishonest man, clothed with such exclusive authority, might have swamped the church by saddling it with a heavy debt for a costly building, or ruined it by embezzling the funds. The end does not justify the means.]

When the articles were adopted, the first question was on the choice of a business or building agent. Now I had no thought or intention of taking that position. I had no knowledge of building, nor experience in details. Besides the doubt I had as to my ability in business would have driven the thought away if it had occurred to me. There were two or three carpenters in the society, and I supposed that the choice would naturally have fallen on one of them. But to my surprise they all declined the honor. The truth was, they had none of them much if any faith that the enterprise would succeed, and they did not wish to be identified with failure.

In this state of the case, they began to declare, one after another, that I was the only man to be chosen the building agent. All that had so far been done had been done by me, and there was no one else so well qualified to carry it through. Well, after a long talk, I saw clearly that if I did not take up the burden the whole thing must fail, and I consented. It brought upon me the most wearing, irritating, and thankless labor of my life.

I at once went to work with all the pushing energy I could command. One of the members had a saw-mill and lumber. In getting his subscription he had offered to supply all the timber for the frame; and, with the understanding that he should do this, he had put against his name a sum sufficient, as he thought, to cover the estimated cost. After securing the site, I went to hurry him up. It was still winter, an unfit time to begin building operations. But I got him to promise that the timber for the frame should be on the ground at a certain time.

Some of the members advised me to let the whole job by contract. I took counsel of my instincts. I told them that a con-

tractor would probably either make or lose money; I did not want any man to lose a cent of money by us, and we could not afford to let one grow rich out of us,—so I should build by the day.

I happily selected the right kind of a man to put in the stone foundation and underpinning. He did his work well, and at a reasonable cost.

I took one of the carpenters with me, and went away ten miles to another saw-mill, and bought a pile of pine boards, some of it clear and some knotty, that I hoped would be enough of such material as we would need.

I made a bargain for a large quantity of nails, of sizes, at a uniform price of \$3.75 a hundred pounds; a price then very low, but since then the cost of this material has been much reduced.

Meantime, and before spring opened, I was unremitting in my efforts to fill up my subscription. I had already exhausted all chance of raising money among my church-members and their friends; and I must now try what could be done among outsiders. Here my success exceeded my expectations. I found more readiness to help me than I had counted upon. Two things aided me. Some men had an ambition to see the village built up; and they contributed in the belief that a new church would add materially to the appearance of the village, as well as to the value of their property. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." The second cause of success was of a more personal nature. Some of the villagers had already begun to look upon the projected meeting-house, as not so much the work of a church society, as my own individual enterprise. It appeared that I had secured the sympathy of the Republicans, in the previous campaign, to such an extent that they were disposed to help me in the work to which I was so warmly devoted. As my well-wishers they urged others to come to my assistance when they had not the means to contribute themselves. An active canvass was, to my surprise, spontaneously going on in my favor. So from Republicans I received valuable contributions. I even, then, ventured to ask Democrats for subscriptions; and here, if I did not meet with

much success, I received no angry rebuff. One leading and wealthy Democrat did, indeed, give me a small subscription; and surprised me, as he did so, by saying, "I have told our folks that I had more respect for you than I had for our minister; for in the campaign you hit us as hard as you could, and tried to plaster it over."

I am inclined here to pause, to note a reflection: It is safer as well as in other ways better to do what you think is right, than to be guided by the suggestions of expediency. Some of my brethren, who professed to be opposed to slavery themselves, said to me in the heat of the battle that I was ruining all chances of building a meeting-house by exasperating the pro-slavery people, and advised that I should at once tone myself down. This advice had no other effect than to make me more outspoken. At the same time, young as I was, I was not sure that I was not putting it out of my own power ever to achieve the ultimate purpose I had at heart; but I did not permit this fear to cause me to waver in my obedience to my convictions. But as it turned out, my course was, with one side, a great help to the meeting-house project; and, with the other, it secured a good measure of personal respect.

The timber for the frame of the house was delivered on the ground promptly according to promise. The brother, a carpenter, who had prepared the schedule of the timber, came to me one morning, and startled me by saying that he had hastily looked over the timber, and thought that it was not fit to put into a frame. I went with him to the spot, and he pointed out to me some large sticks, designed for heavy beams, that were "wany-edged" and otherwise unfit; and he said the only thing to do was to condemn the whole lot, make the man who furnished it take it back, and get a new frame at a good mill. And this was said in apparent unconsciousness that such a procedure might ruin the whole enterprise, by involving me in a quarrel with the brother who had furnished the timber as his contribution; by causing great delay and greatly increased cost; and by the nameless injury of paralyzing the faith of all who were interested in the work. And this was the man I was at one time ignorant enough to believe would make

a good building agent; and who was by this time sorry that he had not taken the post when it was offered to him. What an escape for us that he did not foresee that the project would go forward.

Of course such senseless talk did not affect me for a moment. But I engaged him, at wages, to take the schedule and overhaul the timber; to check off every defective stick, so that I might know if any of it would answer the purpose, and report as soon as possible.

About two hours after dinner he came to say that if six new sticks for beams were procured, those sticks whose places they would take might be used in place of some shorter ones in the schedule, and a good frame might be made. I was overjoyed at his report. I at once drove to the mill, ten miles away, where I had bought the pile of pine boards, and laid down a memorandum of the six beams I wanted, and asked if they could be sawed and delivered in Farmington before the next Saturday. I was told it could be done, and it was done. And \$60 were added outright to the cost of the building.

I had an idea, when I began the work, that it would be wise for each department to get if I could some man specially adapted to the work to be done. A carpenter may be a very good workman in finishing a building, who would be almost worthless in framing it. I was again exceedingly lucky in hunting up the man who was one of the greatest geniuses in the way of framing a building ever known. He lived twelve miles distant, on his own farm. He did nothing in the trade except framing; and was in great request for this work. I drove to his house, and was happily able to engage him, at wages which would now seem fabulously low. It was agreed that he should begin the next Monday,—the very next Monday after the day on which I had been sagely advised to condemn the timber. In how many ways should I have been involved in difficulties if I had followed that advice!

The framing was begun at the appointed time, rapidly pushed to completion. The entire men force of the village, almost, came to the raising; and it was pronounced the best frame ever put up

in town. The master framer had not made a single mistake; every measurement had been accurate, and every tenant fitted the right mortise. I must add that he had framed it without plans. I was determined to avoid, if I could, the expense of an architect. I gave to this superior man all the dimensions I had decided upon, and described to him the general character of the structure as I had designed it; with this scanty data he went on and put up the substantial skeleton. He finished his work, and took with him my respect and admiration when he left.

I had a carpenter already engaged to superintend the work of boarding and finishing, and the construction proceeded without delay. I gave my own time entirely to the building. I was at all times about it, except when away procuring material. I put my hand to everything I could do. I "split" nearly all the boards used into their necessary dimensions. I did this work, in advance of its being called for, on all the boards required for pew construction. As soon as any outside finish had been completed, I applied a coat of "priming,"—this being a more economical method than keeping a painter on hand for that purpose, as he could be employed only a few hours in a day.

When the shingles were to be put on, I was lucky again in finding the man specially fitted for such work. He did it well, and with great rapidity. I have since seen three regular carpenters lay a less number of shingles in a day than were faithfully put on in the same length of time by that one man.

I never worked harder, except at a period later in life, than I did that summer. I gave my whole time and thought during the week to the building. When Saturday night came, after I had paid off the workmen, and written up my accounts, it was usually twelve o'clock; and I sank to slumber a thoroughly exhausted man. I arose on Sunday morning entirely listless and inert, with no preparation whatever for preaching. At the appointed hour I went, with tired step, nearly a mile to the old shell where we then held our meetings, and mumbled over some form of words, in the place of preaching, and let it go at that. It must have been from

habit or from sympathy that people came to my meeting that summer. For, as I now remember it, a more lifeless and disjointed style of talk was never sounded from the pulpit. The fact was that I had set my heart on the completion of that meeting-house; my whole soul was bound up in it,—and I could think of nothing else. I am now inclined to think that in all that time the thought that the purpose of the gospel was to save souls never occurred to me, only, finish the church, if the heavens fall!

Early in September, of that eventful year, the panic of 1857 struck the country, and “dried up realms to deserts.” In a few weeks the meeting-house would have been finished; but now it seemed that my enterprise would be paralyzed. For the convenience of the subscribers, I had been collecting their subscriptions in installments; but, in the conditions brought on by the panic, many could not pay me a farthing. But I would not despair. I went to the churches of like faith in neighboring towns, and begged for the Farmington meeting-house. I raised money out of town, in small sums, on my personal credit. I pressed through all difficulties, and saw the end at length.

The edifice was dedicated early in October,—all paid for, but I was without a penny. At the final casting up of the items of cost, the sum total amounted to \$2.50 less than the estimated cost, \$3,000. I have no disposition to boast of this achievement. I had trouble enough and annoyance enough as I labored in it to take the conceit all out of me. But it is worth putting down that a church edifice was built, by one entirely inexperienced in such an undertaking, and built by days' work, within the amount it was estimated to cost.

It is proper to say, that among the people of the town, more, perhaps, than by the few members of the church and society for whom it was built, it was recognized as a work to be placed to my personal credit. I could hardly go out on the street without meeting a man who would say, “Well, Elder, you've done what no other man could.” This was repeated till I was tired of hearing it. Of course I appreciated the kindness of feeling which prompted the

expression ; but I knew it was overdrawn. Any man, with the same devotion to the object, and the same determination in prosecuting it, could have accomplished as much.

I easily accounted for the lukewarmness of gratitude among my own "peculiar" people, and it did not disappoint me. Early in the progress of the work, serious disaffection began to manifest itself. Some, when they saw that success was probable, felt mortified that they did not have charge of the work. And when they attempted to interfere with my methods, they were disgusted to find that the articles adopted by the society gave me full authority. In this respect, as already indicated, I do not hold myself entirely blameless. But they had only themselves to thank that one of themselves was not chosen building agent. I certainly used all my powers of persuasion to get some member of the society to accept the trust.

But I do not care to discuss the details of any disagreements that arose. It would only be dabbling in the baser caprices of human nature. Thirty-six years have passed since then ; and whatever feelings might then have disturbed me have long since subsided and disappeared. I will only add that one night I had a serious debate with myself. There had been developments that day which convinced me that those for whose benefit I was undertaking a work of great hardship would be constantly throwing obstacles in my way ; that where I had a right to expect co-operation I should find only opposition ; that I bitterly felt that I had better drop the whole thing, and quietly go away. I walked the floor far into the night while wrestling with this question. At last I thought that the work I proposed to do might be a benefit to a future generation of Christians, however those then on the stage might see fit to act. I do not think that such hopefulness would inspire me now. But then it proved decisive, and I accepted my fate. I imagine that the real truth was, that where it was "brave to combat" I could not "learn to fly."

I must not omit to say that three or four of the church-members were faithful to me throughout, and gave me manful help.

As was to be expected, when we began our meetings in the new building the audience largely increased. I now gave attention to sermonizing. But I soon found I could not come up to my own conceptions. No complaint on this score was heard for months; but I was painfully conscious of my own shortcomings. The fact was, that after the terrible strain that had taxed my nervous energy for six months, there came the inevitable reaction, and my powers would not rally. I suppose my personal manner during the week revealed my mental condition; for an old and retired physician, meeting me one day, told me I was not looking well, and advised me to take opium as a tonic. Of course I did not do that. But I had considerable of "that tired feeling" all through the winter. I am scarcely conscious of more mental feebleness now in my old age than I was at that time.

The next spring I exchanged pulpits with another minister, and at his request, who was then seeking another settlement. He was a man not of any special depth of thought, but he had a polished and charming manner, and made an immense impression. Then those who had been nursing their disaffection towards me since the agitated times of the building, broke out into a loud outcry that he was the man whom the Lord designed to fill that pulpit. I presume that if I had made a fight, with the moral support of the public of that village, I could have beaten them. But though I would confront any opposition in defence of my convictions, I had no taste for a personal contest, and abandoned the field.

I revisited Farmington three years ago, and found the church apparently prosperous, and the church edifice much enlarged. I estimated that they had spent in improvements three times as much as the original cost. So, for good or evil, my work did not fail.

Invited to speak in the church, I said such things as to how men should try to live, whether Christians or not, that the minister was shocked, and had to attempt a reply. Personally, I was cordially and kindly received, and enjoyed my visit.

CHAPTER V.

MINISTRY—CONTINUED.

When I closed my work at Farmington, in the spring of 1858, I was offered a pulpit at Effingham, New Hampshire. It was a small and secluded place, and the meeting was supported jointly by orthodox and Freewill people. I chose to accept this place because of my jaded mental condition, and the work would be light. I could preach there easily, and at the same time have some chance to rest, and some hope to recuperate. There is nothing to be said of my ministry there. The people were easily satisfied; and, more wonderful still, there was no fighting between the two sects who were joined in one meeting.

I preached one sermon there which was so much admired that it was put in print,—the first of my sermons to have the honor of being embalmed in type. It had for a text, “And the common people heard him gladly.” I look it over now, and find it a very poor production. If I should make a sermon now it would not be at all like that.

There was one trifling circumstance that occurred at Effingham, that had some slight bearing on the question that had already begun to trouble me, “Does preaching do any good?” I would give a sermon that people would praise, but I could not perceive that it had any effect on life or character. It did not seem that it was expected to quicken kindlier feeling or awaken nobler purpose. If it only increased the audience and built up the church, that was enough.

One afternoon I called on a family in the parish. I found only “the lady of the house” at home. I had been there but a few minutes when she said,—

“Elder, I knew who you were hitting last Sunday.”

Now I did not dream that I was hitting any one in particular. But I asked,—

“Who was I hitting?”

“I don't know how you found it out,” she rejoined. “But you described exactly the quarrel that Mrs. Jones and me have been carrying on.”

(Now Jones was not the other woman's name; but I have been careful to give no names in these recollections.)

“I assure you, madam,” I said, “that I never heard the slightest hint of any misunderstanding between you and Mrs. Jones. But now that you have mentioned it, you may tell me about it, if you wish.”

Then she gave me the details, which I have forgotten. She said it had long been a trouble on her mind, and she wished she could “make up.”

Now it had seemed to me that the other woman was the most placable and gentle of the two, and I thought it worth while to try and end the feud. So I gave her some “instructions” as to her duty in the matter, and advised her to make the first advances towards an understanding.

The next afternoon I took occasion to call upon Mrs. Jones. I made some general observations on the happiness of a community where the people lived in sympathy and at peace with each other; and then went on to say that as there seemed to be a general state of good feeling in the neighborhood at the time, it would be delightful, if any were at variance, they should take advantage of the opportunity to compose their differences. Upon which she said,—

“I guess you have been told that Mrs. Brown (name fictitious) and I do not speak to each other.”

I said I was not ignorant of it; but I thought the matter could easily be arranged, and felt sure that if Mrs. Brown came to talk it over, she (Mrs. Jones) would meet her more than half way.

“I have always been ready to do that,” she rejoined, with a pleasant smile.